

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1. (Currently amended) A conversation support apparatus, comprising:

picture capture means for capturing pictures of a first user and a second user;

first conversion means for converting first picture information of the first user, whose picture has been captured, into at least one of character information and sign information as first information that the second user is capable of perceiving;

second conversion means for converting second picture information of the second user, whose picture has been captured, into second information that the first user is capable of perceiving;

a first main body, having a first display screen for displaying the first information which has been converted;

a second main body, having a second display screen for displaying the second information which has been converted and also capable of displaying the first information;

a connection mechanism for connecting the first main body and the second main body so that the first display screen and the second display screen is capable of being placed at an angle different from each other; and

storage means for correlatively storing a plurality of picture patterns of lips of a person who pronounces sound and character information of the first information corresponding to sound that the person pronounces,

wherein the picture capture means captures a picture of the lips of the first user as the first picture information,

wherein the first conversion means has:

picture pattern comparison means for comparing the captured picture information and each of the picture patterns, picture pattern selection means for selecting one picture pattern corresponding to the captured lip picture information from the picture patterns corresponding to the compared result, and

character information extraction means for extracting the character information corresponding to the selected picture pattern,

wherein the storage means correlatively stores the picture patterns of each of the plurality of people and the character information and stores lips shape patterns of each of the plurality of people, and

wherein the conversation support apparatus further comprises:

shape pattern comparison means for comparing the captured lip picture information and the shape patterns, and

shape pattern selection means for selecting a shape pattern that is the most similar to the captured lip picture information from the shape patterns corresponding to the compared result.

2. (Original) The conversation support apparatus as set forth in claim 1, further comprising:

sound collection means for collecting sound of the first user; and

third conversion means for converting the collected sound into the first information.

3. (Canceled)

4. (Currently amended) The conversation support apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein the first conversion means converts the second picture information into sound information as the second information, and

wherein the conversation support apparatus further comprises:

output means for outputting the converted sound information.

5. (Canceled)

6. (Original) The conversation support apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein the first display screen displays the second information nearly in synchronization with timing the second display screen displays the second information.

7. (Currently amended) The conversation support apparatus as set forth in claim 1, 3, wherein ~~when the first conversion means converts the first picture information into character information and sign information,~~ the first display screen displays the sign information, which has been converted by the first conversion means, and

wherein the second display screen displays the character information, which has been converted by the first conversion means, nearly in synchronization with timing the first display means displays the sign information.

8. (Original) The conversation support apparatus as set forth in claim 2, further comprising:

measurement means for measuring a sound pressure level or a noise level of sound of the first user;

setting means for setting a threshold value of the sound pressure level or the noise level;  
and

execution means for causing the third conversion means to execute a conversion process when the measured sound pressure level or noise level is equal to or larger than the threshold value.

9. (Original) The conversation support apparatus as set forth in claim 2, further comprising:

measurement means for measuring a sound pressure level or a noise level of sound of the first user;

setting means for setting a threshold value of the sound pressure level or the noise level;  
and

execution means for causing the first conversion means to execute a conversion process when the measured sound pressure level or the noise level is equal to or larger than the threshold value.

10-15. (Canceled)

16. (Original) The conversation support apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein the connection mechanism connects the first main body and the second main body so that the second main body is capable of being twisted against the first main body and also is capable of being folded to the first main body.

17-18. (Canceled)

19. (New) A conversation support apparatus, comprising:

picture capture means for capturing pictures of a first user and a second user;

first conversion means for converting first picture information of the first user, whose picture has been captured, into at least one of character information and sign information as first information that the second user is capable of perceiving;

second conversion means for converting second picture information of the second user, whose picture has been captured, into second information that the first user is capable of perceiving;

a first main body, having a first display screen for displaying the first information which has been converted;

a second main body, having a second display screen for displaying the second information which has been converted and also capable of displaying the first information, a connection mechanism for connecting the first main body and the second main body so that the first

display screen and the second display screen is capable of being placed at an angle different from each other; and

storage means for correlatively storing a plurality of picture patterns of lips of a human who pronounces sound and sign information of the first information corresponding to sound that the human pronounces,

wherein the picture capture means captures a picture of the lips of the first user as the first picture information,

wherein the first conversion means has:

picture pattern comparison means for comparing information of the captured picture of the lips of the first user and the picture patterns;

picture pattern selection means for selecting one picture pattern corresponding to the information of the captured picture of the lips of the first user from the picture patterns corresponding to the compared result; and

sign information extracting means for extracting the sign information corresponding to the selected picture pattern,

wherein the storage means correlatively stores the picture patterns of each of the plurality of people and the sign information and stores lips shape patterns of each of the plurality of people, and

wherein the conversation support apparatus further comprises:

shape pattern comparison means for comparing the information of the captured picture of the lips of the first user and the shape patterns; and

shape pattern selection means for selecting one shape pattern that is the most similar to the information of the captured picture of the lips of the first user from the shape patterns corresponding to the compared result.